



Improving Child Welfare Outcomes through Systems of Care

Administrative Data Report 2001-2008: Alamance, Bladen, and Mecklenburg Counties

September 30, 2009

I. OVERVIEW

In 2003, North Carolina was a recipient of a five year System of Care demonstration grant from the Children's Bureau to support their efforts to ensure the safety, permanency, and well-being of children and families involved with the child welfare system. The grant is being piloted in Alamance, Bladen, and Mecklenburg Counties. The grant enables communities to implement changes in policies and practices, increase community collaborations, and engage in other activities to improve child welfare outcomes. All activities are grounded in the System of Care principles, which include:

- Interagency collaboration
- Cultural competence
- Community-based services
- Individualized, strengths-based approaches
- Child and family involvement
- Accountability to results

The administrative data collection protocol, designed by the System of Care national evaluators, consists of data elements required by the Children's Bureau Adoption and Foster Care Analysis and Reporting System (AFCARS) and data that is included in the Child Welfare System Improvement and Accountability Act (Child and Family Services Review) reports. The calendar years from which the data were pulled were 2001, 2003, and 2005, and the federal fiscal years of 2007 and 2008 (October 1, 2006 – September 30, 2008).¹ Because the Multiple Response System (MRS) was piloted in these three counties in 2002, administrative data from 2001 was collected in order to obtain baseline information prior to the MRS and System of Care initiatives.

¹ The data for calendar years 2001, 2003, and 2005 was pulled by staff at the Jordan Institute for Families, University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill in May, 2008. The data for federal fiscal years 2007 and 2008 was pulled in August, 2009.

Data was collected for two different populations of child welfare cases: a point in time sample and an entry cohort sample. The point in time sample consists of substantiated cases and services needed cases (2001 pre-MRS data only includes substantiated cases) that were open for services (CPS, family preservation, or foster care) at some point between January 1 and December 31 of each year (for 2007 and 2008 data these dates were October 1, 2006 through September 30, 2008). This sample provides a snapshot of all cases in the child welfare system during the review period. Throughout this report, this sample is referred to as “all open cases.” These cases could have been open for several years prior to the data collection date. For example, a case initially opened in the year 2000 might still have been open at some point during 2001, 2003, etc.

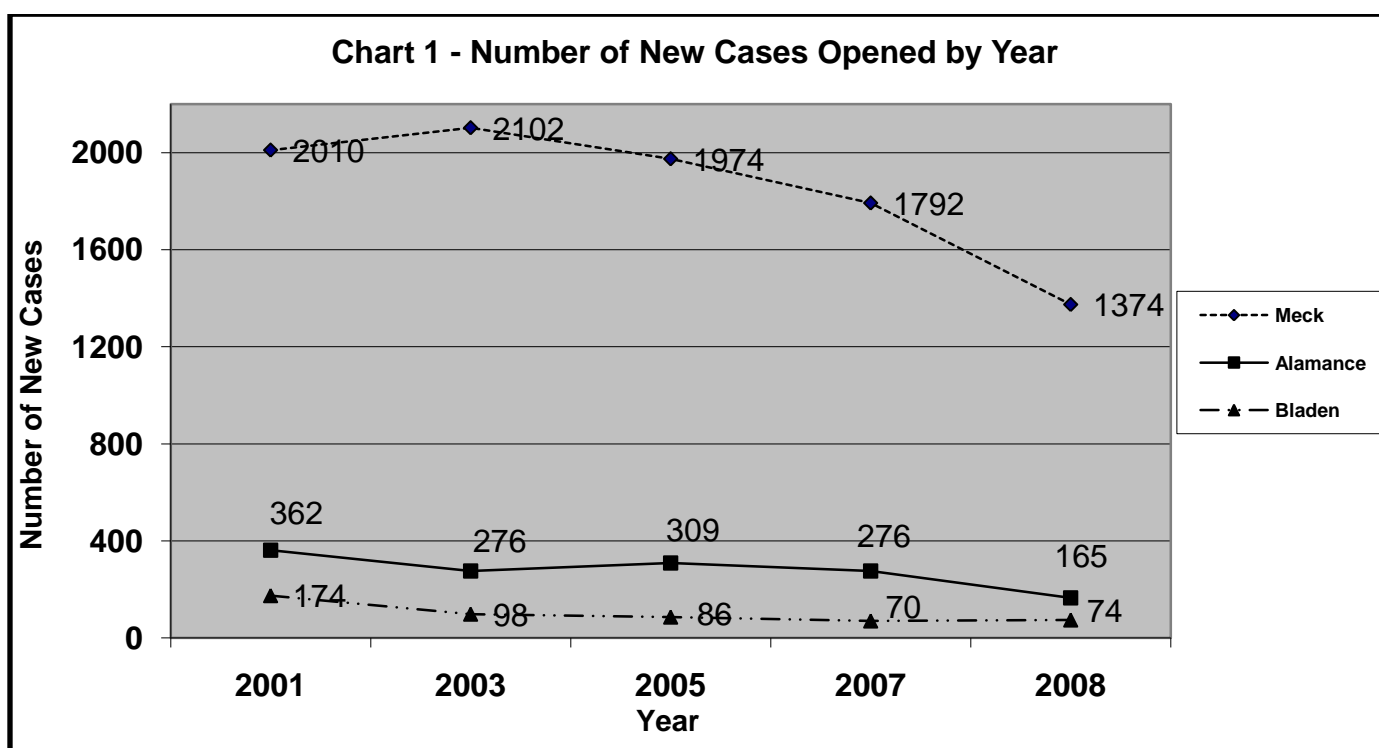
The entry cohort sample consists of cases that initially entered the child welfare system at some point between January 1 and December 31 of each year (for 2007 and 2008 data these dates were October 1, 2006 through September 30, 2008). This sample provides information on cases initially substantiated/found in need of services and open for services within the review period. Throughout this report, this sample is referred to as “new cases.” Data was collected on two different samples because child welfare outcomes may differ depending on the length of time a family has been involved with the system. Child characteristics and child welfare outcomes from the sample of all open cases will typically be impacted by length bias, or the fact that they could have been potentially open far longer than the sample of new cases. The point in time sample (all open cases) is thus likely to include a greater proportion of older children, a greater proportion of children with long lengths of stay in foster care, and a greater number of out-of-home placements than the entry cohort sample (new cases), simply because the cases could have been open longer.

II. BACKGROUND DATA AND CHILD CHARACTERISTICS

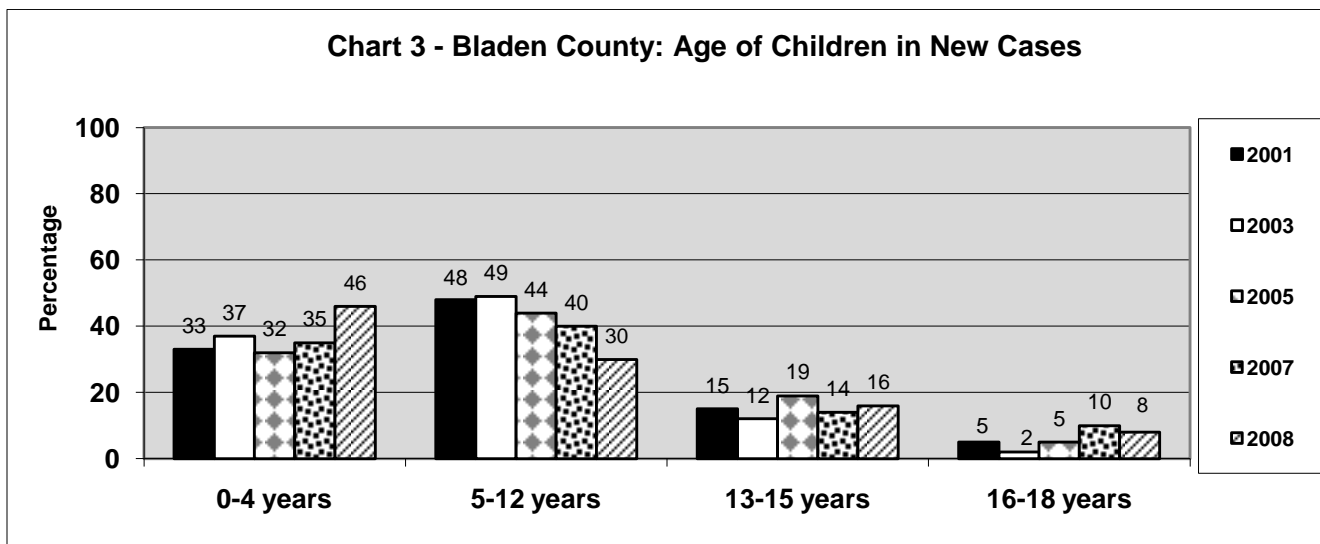
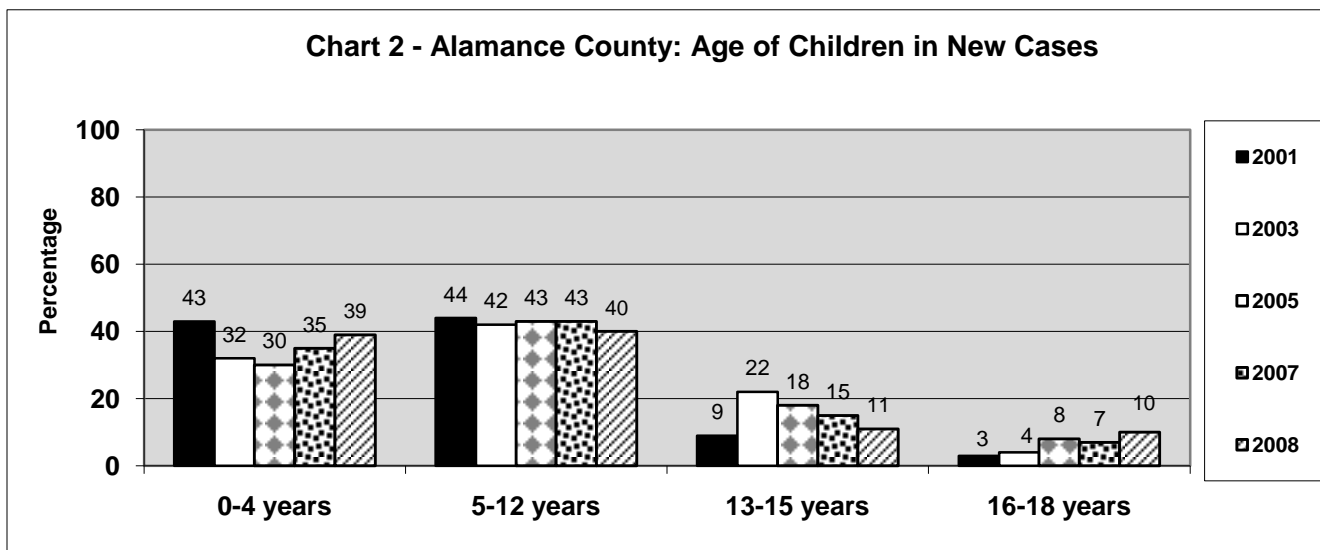
A. Demographics – New Cases

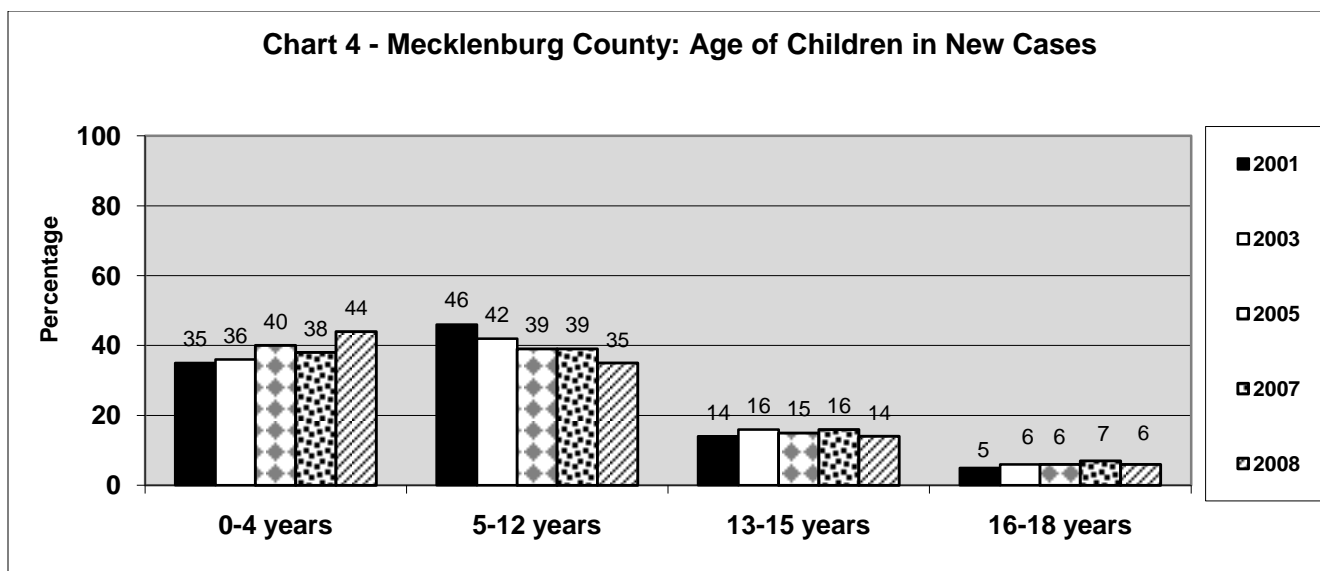
Chart 1 shows the number of new cases opened for each county from 2001 to 2008.

These are all cases initially opened during the five review periods where reports of child maltreatment were either substantiated or found in need of services. According to administrative data for all three counties, the number of new cases opened decreased significantly from 2001 to 2008 (see Chart 1).



For all three counties, the majority of children in the cases that were initially opened during the five review periods (new cases) were 12 years of age or younger (see Charts 2-4).





Gender appeared to be equally distributed for all three counties (see Tables 1-3). With respect to the race/ethnicity of children in the new cases, there are some noteworthy trends for all three counties. In Alamance County, the percentage of black children decreased from 34% in 2003 to 21% in 2008, while the percentage of Hispanic children also decreased from 12% in 2003 to 2% in 2008. Conversely, the percentage of white children increased from 47% in 2003 to 60% in 2008, and the percentage of Asian/Other children increased from 7% to 17% during the same time period.

Table 1 –Alamance County: Child Characteristics (New Cases)

Child Characteristics	2001	2003	2005	2007	2008
Gender					
Female	51%	51%	52%	51%	48%
Male	49%	49%	48%	49%	52%
Race					
Black	33%	34%	32%	32%	21%
White	51%	47%	51%	56%	60%
Hispanic	11%	12%	14%	5%	2%
Asian/Other	6%	7%	3%	7%	17%
Native American	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%

In Bladen County, the percentage of black children increased from 26% in 2003 to 42% in 2008, and the percentage of white children decreased from 66% to 50%. Lastly, in Mecklenburg County, the percentage of Hispanic children decreased from 8% in 2003 to 1% in 2008, while the percentage of Asian/Other children increased from 10% in 2003 to 25% in 2008.

Table 2 –Bladen County: Child Characteristics (New Cases)

Child Characteristics	2001	2003	2005	2007	2008
Gender					
Female	47%	50%	55%	50%	45%
Male	53%	50%	45%	50%	55%
Race					
Black	43%	26%	28%	39%	42%
White	48%	66%	66%	50%	50%
Hispanic	5%	6%	5%	3%	8%
Asian/Other	1%	0%	1%	6%	0%
Native American	3%	2%	0%	3%	0%

Table 3 – Mecklenburg County: Child Characteristics (New Cases)

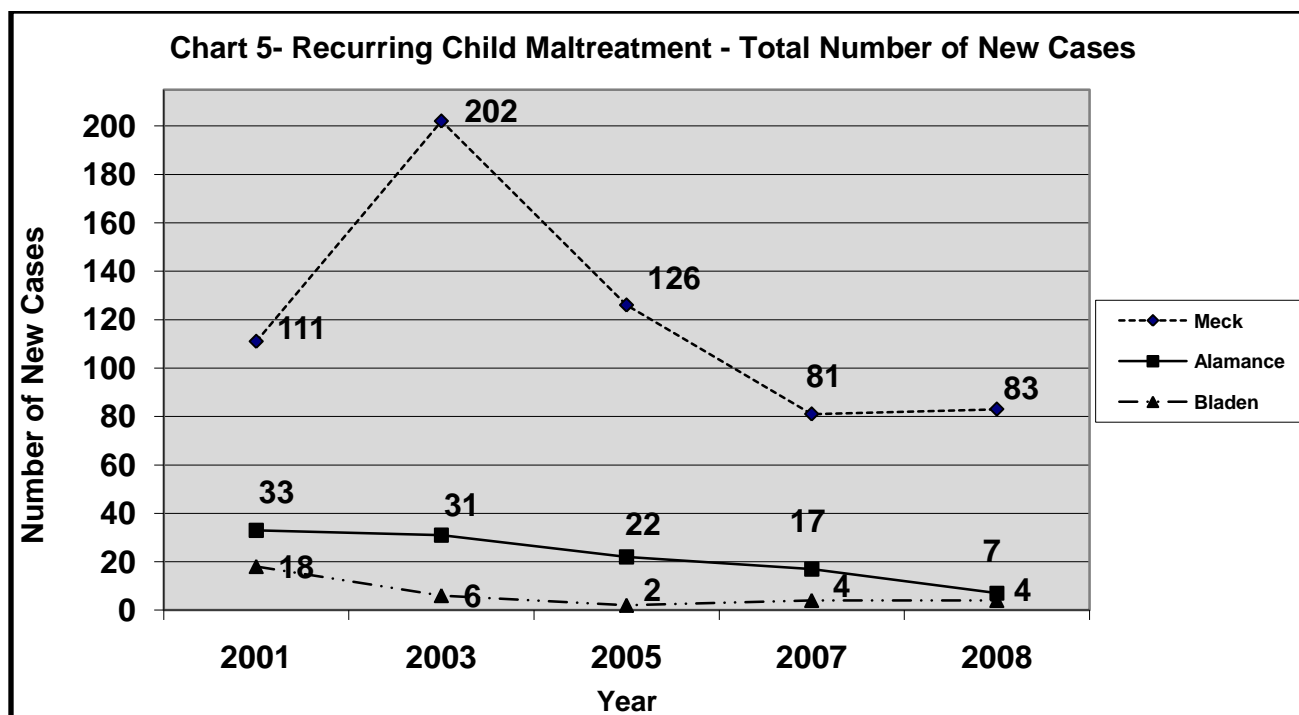
Child Characteristics	2001	2003	2005	2007	2008
Gender					
Female	49%	49%	47%	54%	49%
Male	51%	51%	53%	46%	51%
Race					
Black	70%	63%	65%	57%	62%
White	18%	18%	14%	14%	13%
Hispanic	6%	8%	6%	7%	1%
Asian/Other	6%	10%	14%	22%	25%
Native American	<1%	<1%	0%	0%	0%

III. CHILD SAFETY

A. Absence of Recurrence of Child Maltreatment – New Cases

For all three counties, the absence of recurrence of child maltreatment increased from 2003 to 2008 among all new cases (see Table 4). The largest increase in the absence of recurrence of maltreatment occurred in Alamance County (88.8% in 2003 vs. 95.8% in 2008). Both Alamance and Bladen Counties met the national standard, 94.6%, in 2008. Mecklenburg was six tenths of a percent shy of meeting the national standard in 2008. It is important to note that the recurrence of child maltreatment is defined as those children who were substantiated victims of child abuse and/or neglect, or found to be in need of services and had another report substantiated or found to be in need of services within six months.

Table 4- Absence of Recurrence of Child Maltreatment Percentage (New Cases)					
	2001	2003	2005	2007	2008
Alamance	90.9%	88.8%	92.9%	93.8%	95.8%
Bladen	87.8%	93.9%	97.7%	94.39%	94.6%
Mecklenburg	94.5%	90.4%	93.6%	95.5%	94.0%

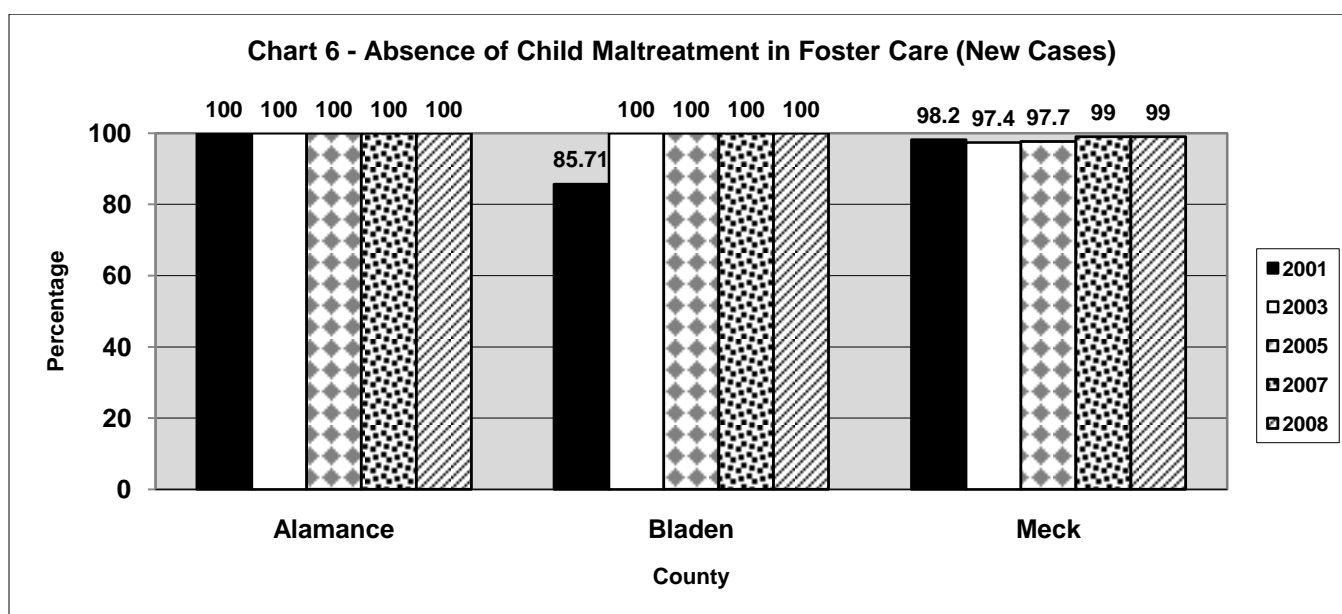


B. Absence of Child Maltreatment among Children in Foster Care – New Cases

As shown in Table 5, across the three counties, administrative data indicates that 9-35% of new cases involved at least one out of home placement during the five review periods. In Bladen County, the percentage of new cases with at least one out of home placement decreased from 22% in 2003 to 9% in 2008. Conversely, the percentage of cases with an out of home placement increased in both Alamance and Mecklenburg Counties from 2003 to 2008.

Table 5 – Case Type At Least One Out-of-Home Placement (New Cases)					
	2001	2003	2005	2007	2008
Alamance	10% (n=38)	16% (n=43)	15% (n=47)	20% (n=55)	35% (n=58)
Bladen	16% (n=24)	22% (n=22)	23% (n=20)	19% (n=13)	9% (n=7)
Mecklenburg	14% (n=285)	17% (n=253)	18% (n=355)	22% (n=394)	21% (n=286)

Chart 6 represents the absence of incidents of child maltreatment while in foster care where a foster parent or facility staff member was the perpetrator. For new cases in Alamance and Bladen Counties, the proportion of cases where maltreatment occurred while in care remained completely stable at 100% from 2003 to 2008. In Mecklenburg Counties, the rate for the absence of maltreatment in care increased from 2003 to 2008. Both Alamance and Bladen Counties met the national standard, 99.68%, for new cases in 2008. Mecklenburg County was seven tenths of a percent short of meeting the national standard for new cases in 2008.



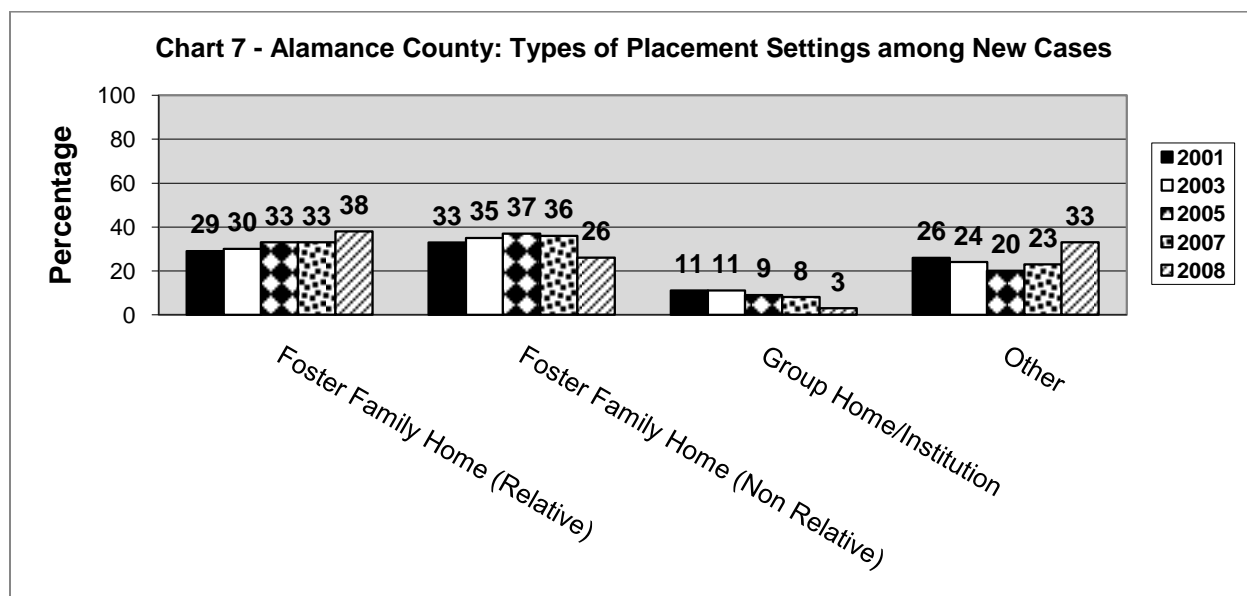
IV. OUT-OF-HOME CARE

A. Placement Settings – New Cases

The percentages of various placement settings for all new cases in Alamance, Bladen, and Mecklenburg Counties from 2001 to 2008 are shown in Charts 7-9.² The most frequent placement setting for all three counties was foster care. In Alamance County, there was an

² Charts 7-9 are representative of the last placement the child was in during the review periods.

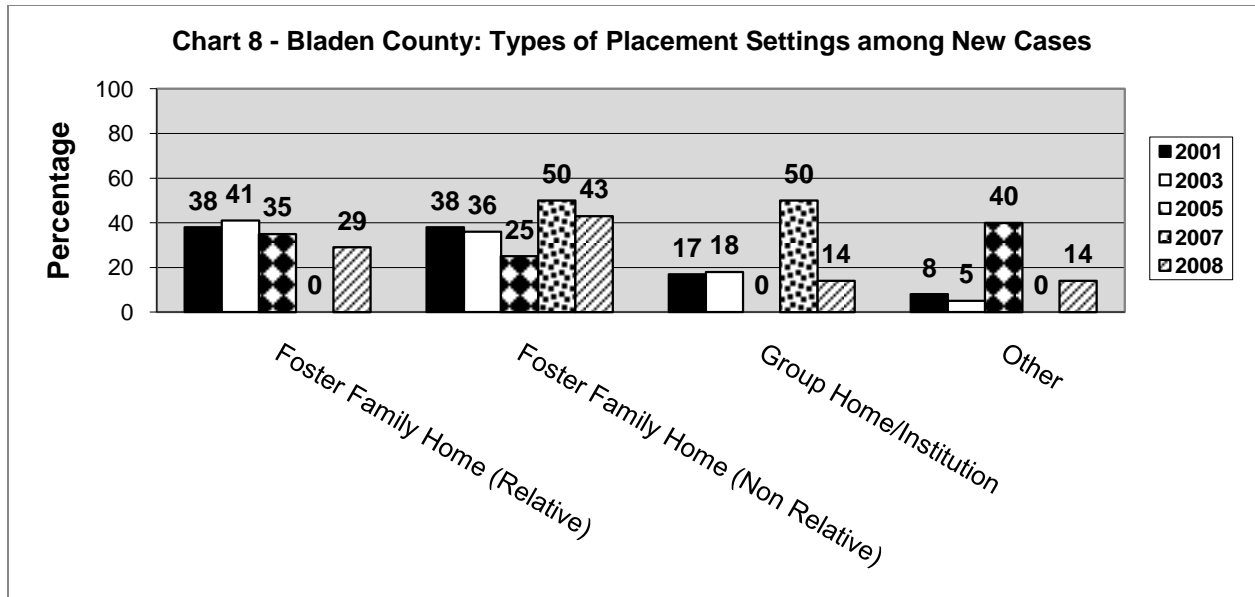
increase in the percentage of children placed in a relative foster family home³ from 2003 to 2008 (30% vs. 38%; see Chart 7). This increase in relative foster family home placements coincided with a decrease in both non relative foster family home and group home/institution placements from 2003 to 2008. In addition, the percentage of children placed in “other”⁴ settings increased from 24% in 2003 to 33% in 2008.



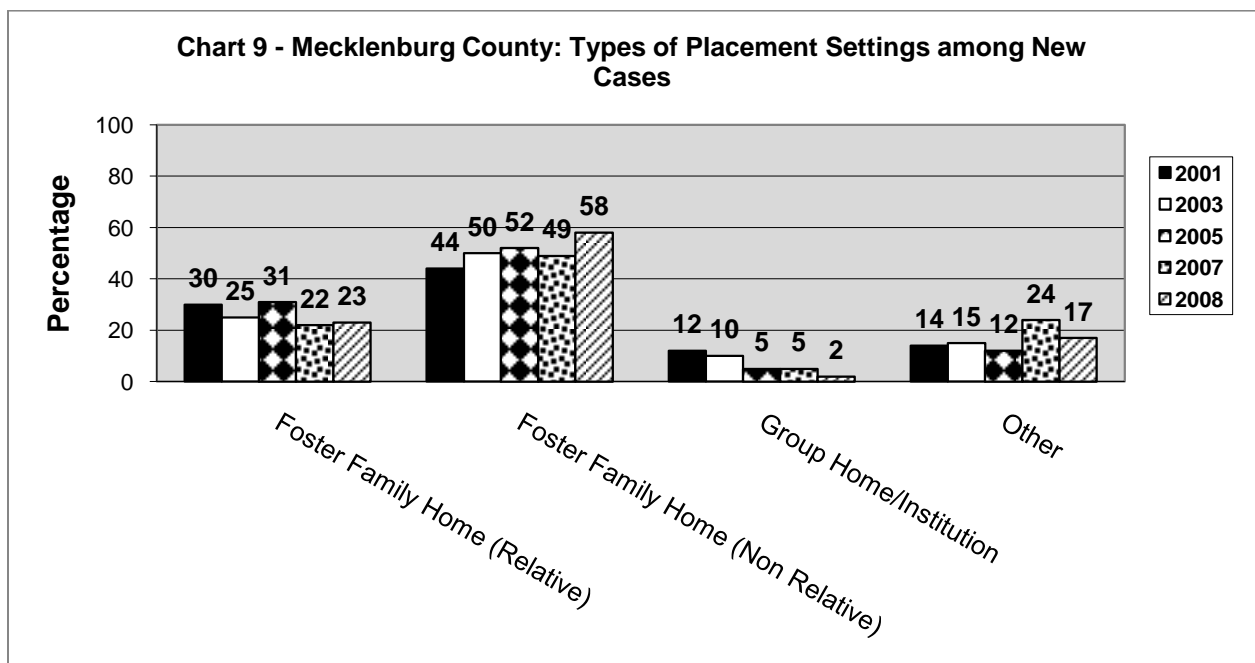
Conversely, in Bladen County there was a decrease in the percentage of children placed in a relative foster family home from 2003 to 2008 (41% vs. 29%; see Chart 8). There was also an increase in the percentage of children placed in non relative foster family homes and “other” settings during this same time period.

³ Foster family home – relative consists of both licensed and unlicensed home of a relative.

⁴ “Other placement settings include pre adoptive homes, supervised independent living, runaways, trial home visits, and unspecified others.



As shown in Chart 9, the percentage of children placed in relative foster family homes in Mecklenburg County remained relatively stable from 2003 to 2008 (25% vs. 23%). While the percentage of children placed in group homes or institutions decreased from 10% in 2003 to 2% in 2008, the percentage of children placed in non relative foster family homes increased from 50% to 58%.



C. Foster Care Re-Entry – All Open Cases

For each of the five review periods, administrative data was examined to calculate the percentage of all children in foster care (all open cases) who were discharged from care during a review period, and then re-entered foster care within 12 months (see Table 6). In Alamance County there was a decrease in the rate of foster care re-entry from 9% in 2003 to 0% in 2007 (see note below table regarding 2008 data). Rates of foster care re-entry for both Bladen and Mecklenburg Counties remained relatively stable and low from 2003 to 2007.

Table 6 - Foster Care Re-Entry (Open Cases)					
	2001	2003	2005	2007	2008
Alamance	2%	9%	7%	0%	3%
Bladen	4%	0%	0%	0%	1%
Mecklenburg	1%	2%	0%	1%	2%

Note. Because the data for 2008 was collected two months before that review period ended, it was not enough time to compile complete data on foster care re-entry within 12 months. Thus, the data presented for 2008 only represents foster care re-entry within 10 months.

D. Number of Placement Moves – All Open Cases

Table 7 shows the percentage of children who were in out of home placements for at least 12 consecutive months, and had three or more placement moves, for all three counties.

Administrative data shows that the number of children experiencing three or more placement moves decreased from 2003 to 2008 for all three counties. Mecklenburg County appears to have the largest decrease in the percentage of children experiencing three or more placement moves within 12 months (61% in 2003 vs. 32% in 2008).

Table 7 – Three or More Placement Moves within 12 Months (Open Cases)					
	2001	2003	2005	2007	2008
Alamance	51%	56%	39%	39%	44%
Bladen	85%	82%	50%	38%	67%
Mecklenburg	64%	61%	46%	34%	32%

E. Permanency Outcomes – All Open Cases

Permanency outcomes were examined for those children who were discharged from care during each of the review period. As shown in Table 8, for all three counties, during all three review periods, the majority of children discharged from care were reunified with their parents. Overall rates for reunification remained relatively stable for both Alamance and Mecklenburg Counties from 2005 to 2008. In Bladen County, the rate of reunification decreased from 80% in 2005 to 50% in 2008. While rates for adoption remained relatively stable from 2005 to 2008 in Mecklenburg County (25% vs. 22%), adoption rates increased in both Alamance and Bladen Counties. The permanency outcome of relative placement increased in Bladen County from 0% in 2005 to 25% in 2008, and remained relatively stable in Mecklenburg County. Conversely, rates for relative placements decreased in Alamance County from 17% in 2005 to 9% in 2008.

Table 8 – Permanency Outcomes for Placement Cases (Open Cases)									
	April 2004 – March 2005			Oct 2006 – Sept 2007			Oct 2007 – Sept 2008		
Outcome	Alamance	Bladen	Mecklenburg	Alamance	Bladen	Mecklenburg	Alamance	Bladen	Mecklenburg
Total Number of Children Discharged from Care During Review Period	(n=69)	(n=20)	(n=475)	(n=53)	(n=31)	(n=623)	(n=67)	(n=8)	(n=472)
Reunification	57%	80%	46%	57%	71%	48%	61%	50%	46%
Relative placement	17%	0%	14%	11%	6%	18%	9%	25%	16%
Adoption	16%	15%	25%	17%	23%	17%	28%	25%	22%
Guardianship	1%	0%	3%	9%	0%	4%	1%	0%	2%
Other	9%	5%	12%	6%	0%	13%	0%	0%	14%
Emancipation (number only)	n=2	n=2	n=37	n=3	n=5	n=42	n=3	n=2	n=50

Note. Data pulled for the calendar years of 2001, 2003, 2005, and 2007 did not contain the information necessary for this table. However, because data for this table was pulled for the timeframe April 2004 – March 2005 for the System of Care National Evaluation Team, we used that data for a baseline comparison for Table 8 only. Children whose permanency outcome was “Emancipation” were not included in the percentages included in this table. “Other” permanency outcomes consist of: Custody with other court approved caretaker; Transfer to other agency; Runaway; and Death of a child.

V. SUMMARY AND DISCUSSION

This report provides a summary of administrative data on Alamance, Bladen, and Mecklenburg Counties for 2001 through Federal Fiscal Year 2008. The purpose of the administrative data collection is to determine the impact of Systems of Care activities on the child welfare population in Alamance, Bladen, and Mecklenburg Counties.

Child Background Characteristics

- During all five review periods, the number of new cases opened (i.e., substantiations or found in need of services), decreased for all three counties.
- The majority of children in new cases, in all three counties, were less than 12 years of age.
- Race/Ethnicity:
 - In Alamance County, the percentage of black and Hispanic children for new cases decreased from 2003 to 2008, while the percentage of white and Asian/Other children decreased.
 - In Bladen County, the percentage of black children increased from 2003 to 2008, while the percentage of white children decreased.
 - In Mecklenburg County, the percentage of Hispanic children decreased from 2003 to 2008, while the percentage of Asian/Other children increased.

Child Safety

- The absence of recurrent child maltreatment in Alamance, Bladen, and Mecklenburg Counties (includes both substantiated and services needed cases) increased from 2003 to 2008.

- Both Alamance and Bladen Counties met the national standard, 94.6%, in 2008, while Mecklenburg County was six tenths of a percent short of meeting the standard.
- Out of home care:
 - In Bladen County, the percentage of new cases with at least one out of home placement decreased from 2003 to 2008.
 - The percentage of cases with an out of home placement increased from 2003 to 2008 for both Alamance and Bladen Counties.
- Absence of maltreatment among children in foster care where a foster parent or facility staff was the perpetrator:
 - In Alamance and Bladen Counties, the absence of child maltreatment occurring while in care remained stable at 100% from 2003 to 2008.
 - In Mecklenburg County, the absence of maltreatment while in care increased from 97.4% in 2003 to 99% in 2008.

Out-of-Home Care

- For all three counties, the largest percentage of placement settings was foster home settings.
 - In Alamance County, the percentage of children placed in a relative foster family home increased from 2003 to 2008, while the percentage of children placed in non relative foster family homes and group homes or institutions decreased.
 - In Bladen County, the percentage of children placed in a relative foster family home decreased from 2003 to 2008, while the percentage of children placed in a non relative foster family home increased.

- In Mecklenburg County, the percentage of children placed in a relative foster family home remained relatively stable from 2003 to 2008, while the percentage of children placed in group homes or institutions decreased and those placed in non relative foster family homes increased.
- Overall, children discharged from foster care in all three counties rarely re-entered foster care within 12 months.
 - In Alamance County there was a decrease in the rate of foster care re-entry from 9% in 2003 and 7% in 2005 to 0% in 2007.
 - In Bladen and Mecklenburg Counties, rates of foster care re-entry remained relatively stable and low from 2003 to 2007.
- In all three counties, for children who were in out-of-home placements for 12 consecutive months or longer, the percentage of these children who had three or more consecutive placement moves decreased from 2003 to 2008.

Permanency

- For those children who were discharged from care during a review period, reunification with parent(s) in all three counties was the actual permanency outcome for the majority of all cases that involved out-of-home placements from 2005 to 2008.
 - In Alamance County, rates for reunification remained relatively stable from 2005 to 2008, while rates for adoption increased and the rates for relative placement decreased.
 - In Bladen County, rates for reunification decreased from 2005 to 2008, while rates for adoption and relative placement increased.

SOC Administrative Data Report – Mecklenburg County

- In Mecklenburg County, rates for reunification, adoption, and relative placement remained relatively stable from 2005 to 2008.